Overlapping worlds: Asian and European experiences of learning and working

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Research and policy context

- Remarkable rediscovery of informal learning
- Return of the active (learning) subject
- Restructuring of labour markets, organisations and work processes (fluidity, dynamics, complexity)
- Retooling links between ET and economic competitiveness towards ‘high/er skills equilibriums’
Issues and debates

- WRL/WPL as crystallisation point for theory and research
- Conceptual debates: knowledge – skills – competences
- Ideological debates: autonomy vs. instrumentalisation of education/learning
- Methodological/technical debates: how to capture learning and its outcomes/impact
Orientation points

- WPL as a form of potentially emancipatory education at individual and social levels
- Employees’ views and experiences as significant parameters for evaluating practice and designing policies
- Learning as participation vs. learning as acquisition
- Expansive vs. restrictive working environments as learning contexts
Survey information

- Common instrument in 11 countries – national reports with differing accents
- 8 countries with 100+ respondents; 7 broad sectors, private and public
- More women than men; age distribution varies by country
- Mostly full-time employment; job tenure varies by country
- In most countries, at least half hold a tertiary qualification; proportion of decent salary earners varies by country
- 2012 comparative analysis: 8 datasets: CN, JP, MY, TH and AT, LV, LT, NL
Research questions

- Learning experiences and outcomes are more fruitful when motivation is positive and participation is voluntary – but is LLL (here as CVET) more like compulsory learning? Do Asian and European employees see and judge such issues differently?

- Three questions follow:
  - What do people interpret to be ‘voluntary’ and ‘compulsory’ with respect to workplace learning? In other words: what concepts do they have about this?
  - What does their company/organization offer in terms of formal and non-formal work-related learning? Which of these are ‘voluntary’ and which ‘compulsory’?
  - How does the perception of work-related learning being ‘voluntary’ or ‘compulsory’ (or possibly: something in-between these two, such as ‘recommended’) affect people’s motivation to pursue such learning and their satisfaction with the learning they have undertaken?
Response clusters 2011

- DK
- NL
- LV
- LT
- GB
- TH
- AT
- CZ
- CN
- JP
Comparative analysis: methods

- Merging files from countries and recoding some variables
- Combining some ordinal Lickert-like variables in scales ($\alpha= .47$ (extrinsic work motivation), $0.61$, $0.67$, $0.75$, $0.82$ and $0.86$ respectively) after factor analysis
- Descriptive comparisons
- Statistical comparisons with multivariate analysis: general linear model
<table>
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<th></th>
<th>Σ all sectors N – %</th>
<th>Comm. Services N – %</th>
<th>F %</th>
<th>M %</th>
<th>&lt;30yrs %</th>
<th>31-47yrs %</th>
<th>47+ yrs %</th>
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Comparative analysis sample
Response clusters 2012

AT   LV
NL   LT
JP
CN   MY   TH
Intrinsic motivation outweighs extrinsic motivation
Beyond mid-adulthood, the intrinsic-extrinsic gender balance reverses.
Concrete benefits (promotion, salary, recognition) are important – but beyond this, differences emerge…
Employees feel encouraged to learn by encounters with novelty and difference.
Salience of workplace learning varies by country – but also possibly between Asia and Europe

Scale: 1 = strongly agree – 5 = strongly disagree
European employees are more critical of their employers provision and practice, and their expectations are higher.
Compulsion and volition: complex patterns between employers’ and employees’ prerogatives
Women employees – especially in Europe – support volition and reject sanctions
Employer-employee relations: more direct versus more indirect
Employers in Asian countries intervene more directly in employees‘ decisions to pursue continuing learning.
Economic and social normative framing of employees’ continuing learning

Reasons why people should continue learning

- They risk to become unemployed
- Because society expects it
Closing remarks

- Eight diverse countries, yet consistent patterns of similarities and differences emerge → overlapping worlds
- Employees’ learning is situated in concrete everyday worlds between structures and agencies
- Organisational environments and their CVET policies/practices operate in specific socio-cultural and macro-economic contexts
- Compulsion and volition are not discrete categories, but a multi-dimensional, personally and socially situated continuum of negotiation and renegotiation
- Qualitative case-studies will now follow…
We thank all our colleagues in Research Network 2 for the commitment and energy that made it possible to conduct this study.

National survey reports are available at the RN2 website, and see our new collection:

*Decoding the meanings of learning at work in Asia and Europe*
L. Chisholm/K. Lunardon/A. Ostendorf/P. P. Pasqualoni (eds.)
University of Innsbruck Press: Innsbruck: 2012
http://www.uibk.ac.at/iup/wop.html